

RESOURCE VIDEO

MODALS (MAY, MIGHT, MUST)

WHAT IS A MODAL VERB?

A **MODAL VERB** is an auxiliary or helping verb. It helps the main verb by slightly changing the meaning. Modal verbs are usually used to express ability, possibility, permission and obligation.

HOW TO USE THE MODALS?

MAY and **MIGHT** are both used to talk about probability and possibility. However, **MIGHT** is more commonly used, and only **MAY** is used to ask or give permission.

- Affirmative: Subject + **may/might** + main verb
- Negative: Subject + **may/might + not** + main verb (might is more commonly used)
- Interrogative: **May** + subject + main verb?

***Important:** We don't begin questions using "**might**", as it would sound like a request. But we can use "might" in the middle of the sentence to show that something is possible.

Ex. "Do you think it might rain later?" = "Do you think it may rain later?"

EXAMPLES USING "MAY" & "MIGHT" TO SHOW POSSIBILITY

1. I may/might be late to the meeting today.
2. It may/might rain later today.
3. You may/might not have time to finish the test.
4. I may/might not make it to work today. I'm not feeling well.

TO GIVE OR ASK FOR PERMISSION, USE MAY

***Important:** To talk about permission, use only **MAY**, not **MIGHT**

EXAMPLES:

1. **May I use the bathroom? (formal way of asking for permission)**
A: Yes, you may use the bathroom. / No, you may not use the bathroom.
2. **May the children have dessert? (asking for permission)**
A: Yes, the children may have dessert. / No, the children may not have dessert.

***May is very formal and very polite.**

Formal: May I use the bathroom? / May I throw this in the garbage? / May I open the window?

Informal: Can I use the bathroom? / Can I throw this in the garbage? / Can I open the window?

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MODALS (MAY, MIGHT, MUST)

TO TALK ABOUT OBLIGATIONS AND TO MAKE ASSUMPTIONS, USE MUST

- Affirmative: Subject + **must** + main verb
- Negative: Subject + **must + not (mustn't)** + main verb
- Interrogative: **Must** + Subject + main verb...?

EXAMPLES

1. You must wear your seatbelt while driving. (obligation)
2. Dogs must be kept on a leash. (obligation)
3. You must be freezing! It's so cold outside and you don't have a jacket on! (assumption)
4. The children must be exhausted. They've been running around all day. (assumption)
5. You mustn't tell anyone about this. (obligation)
6. He's smiling. He mustn't know the news yet. (assumption)
7. Must you always be so negative? (Do you have to be like this?)
8. Must you always use profane language/ swear words? (Is it really necessary?)

Practice question:

Q. What is one thing that you must do today?

Possible answers:

- I must pick up my children from school.
- I must study English.
- I must clean my house.

LET'S REVIEW

- **MAY and/or MIGHT can be used to show possibility**

Ex. I may/might go out tonight. (It's possible that I'll go out tonight)

- **MAY, not MIGHT, is also used to ask and give permission in a polite, formal way.**

Ex. May I open the window? Yes, you may. / No, you may not. (Do I have permission to open the window? Yes, you have permission. / No, you do not have permission.)

- **MUST is used for obligations and/or assumptions**

- Ex. You must wear your seatbelt. (You have to wear your seatbelt)
- Ex. You mustn't eat too much candy. (You cannot eat too much candy)
- Ex. You must be hungry. (I assume that you are hungry)